



January 28, 2020

DELORES BARR WEAVER POLICY CENTER ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Founder Dr. Lawanda Ravoira to Become President Emeritus

Dr. Lawanda Ravoira, who has served as President and CEO of the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center since she founded the organization in 2013, will transition March 1 to the role of President Emeritus, focusing on expansion of the agency's public policy and advocacy work.

Senior Vice President Inderjit Vicky Basra, who has been with the Policy Center since June 2013, will succeed Ravoira as President and CEO, and take over leadership of the agency.

"We are extremely fortunate to have two strong and capable leaders with deep roots in this organization who can work together to expand our work and move the Policy Center forward," said outgoing board chair Audrey Moran. "While this is a time of transition for the Policy Center, it also is a time of growth, lending our expertise to new audiences to improve the lives of girls and young women."

"The board has total confidence in Vicky Basra," said incoming board chair Sherry Magill. "She has the knowledge, expertise and commitment to girls, as well as the skills needed to successfully lead the organization."

While Basra will take over leadership of the Policy Center, reporting to the board, Ravoira will focus strictly on advocacy and public policy, sharing the local work statewide, assisting other communities working on similar issues and connecting to a broader, national network of stakeholders addressing issues of equity for girls and young women.

"Vicky and I have a shared vision of what we hope the world will be for girls," Ravoira said. "I'm excited about the leadership that Vicky will bring and I look forward to seeing how the agency will continue to thrive under her direction. And the Policy Center is ready – ready to deepen our work locally and nationally."

"It is an incredible gift for me to know that I will continue to be mentored and guided by Lawanda," Basra said. "I feel like I'm walking side by side with her."

With the support of philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver, the Policy Center was established in 2013 to help the Jacksonville community address the needs of girls, particularly those impacted by the justice system. At the time, Jacksonville was incarcerating more girls than any other county in Florida – more, in fact, than Miami, Tampa and Fort Lauderdale combined.

The Policy Center brought together research, an advocacy platform, stakeholder training and model program incubation to alter the trajectory for girls. It developed a strong coalition of community advocates for girls from multiple sectors, including citizen advocates, law enforcement, the judicial system and local nonprofits.

With that approach, the incarceration rate for girls in Duval County has dropped 56%, compared with a 23% decline statewide since the Policy Center opened in 2013.

“Our community has been the model of reform for girls,” Ravoira said. “Our citizens, our state attorney, our public defender, our sheriff, our judges, our stakeholders really came together to make our community a model.”

“It’s time to share our knowledge with other places,” Basra said. “We need to have a presence in the national scene and with the national girls movement. Lawanda, in her new role, will help us do that.”

The Policy Center has been inundated with requests for help from other communities and constituencies. The new structure will allow the Policy Center to be more responsive to those requests while ensuring that the Center’s work on the First Coast remains strong.

“I am very proud of the Policy Center and the accomplishments Lawanda Ravoira and her team have made on behalf of girls who, often through no fault of their own, find themselves involved in the justice system,” Weaver said. “I am pleased that Lawanda will be sharing her expertise with the others throughout the state and also nationally. Vicky is more than capable of leading the work locally and will benefit from her years of working with Lawanda.”

The transition plan is the result of several years of planning by the Policy Center board.

“We’ve been talking about succession planning for the last three years,” Moran said. “We have taken a very deliberate approach, seeing the transition as part of the organization’s evolution rather than an abrupt change or bump in the road.”

That intentional approach enabled staff to make strategic hires so that all internal infrastructure is in place for the transition.

“I hope that the way we have approached this transition, and the way Vicky and I will work through the transition, will model how women can lift each other up,” Ravoira said. “It’s not about competition. It’s about women sharing opportunities and challenges.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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DR. LAWANDA RAVOIRA

Dr. Lawanda Ravoira has dedicated her life to the wellbeing of girls, young women, and youth who identify as female. Her vision for empowering these young lives and uplifting their voices led to the 2013 founding of the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, which combines research, advocacy, training, and model programming. The purpose of the Policy Center is to bring a unified strategy for changing the laws, policies, and practices that have contributed to the inequitable treatment of girls.

Ravoira holds a Doctorate of Public Administration from Nova University, a Master of Science in Allied Health from the University of North Florida, and a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from the College of Charleston.

From 1992 to 2005 she served as President and CEO of PACE Center for Girls, a statewide nonprofit providing gender responsive, comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services for girls ages 8-18. Her advocacy led to Florida being the second state in the nation to require gender specific services in the juvenile justice system.

Between 2005 and 2012, she worked as an independent consultant and later as a director at the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and founder of NCCD National Center for Girls and Young Women, leading research and advocacy efforts to promote state of the art services for girls in the State of Florida and development of model programs to address the needs of young girls.



INDERJIT VICKY BASRA

Vicky Basra has spent her career working with women and children enduring the crises of domestic violence and abuse. At Vanderbilt University, she helped develop and implement a violence against women prevention program and developed the only nationally recognized, collegiate co-educational athletic task force, Athletes Against Assault Task Force.

Basra holds a Master of Science, Social Work from the University of Tennessee, a Bachelor of Social Work from Ryerson Polytechnic University, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto. She is studying for her doctorate in social work at the University of Tennessee.

Basra worked at Vanderbilt University from 2002-2009, serving as Director of Project Safe at The Women's Center. From 2010 to 2013 she served as director of family preservation at Family Support Services of Northeast Florida.





ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center brings together research, advocacy, training and program development to address the needs of girls, young women and self-identified females, particularly those impacted by the justice system.

Since its founding in 2013, the Policy Center has:

RESEARCH

Produced 26 original research publications elevating issues impacting girls in the juvenile justice system. Most recently, the Policy Center partnered with the Florida Women's Funding Alliance, an affinity group of the Florida Philanthropic Network to produce *The Status of Girls Well-Being in Florida* (September 2019), addressing the issues of connectedness, safety, freedom from violence and overall health and emotional well-being.

ADVOCACY

Worked in partnership with the Children's Campaign to pass five Florida laws:

- Child Marriage Ban (2018)
- Confidentiality of Juvenile Records (2016)
- Expungement of Records for Minors (2016)
- Civil Citations Expanded (2015)
- Protection of Safe Harbor for child sex trafficking survivors (2014)

TRAINING

Provided 48 trainings for more than 2,000 professionals and been featured at national, state and local conferences/webinars/trainings.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Developed five signature programs focused on preventing and interrupting deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system. From *Girl Matters®: It's Elementary* to *Open Doors Outreach Network*, these programs reach girls from elementary age to young adulthood, working to redirect those at risk and respond to those in need. More than 2,000 girls and young women have been helped by these programs.

Through these efforts, Duval County has experienced a 56% decline in the number of girls incarcerated, compared with a 23% decline statewide since the Policy Center opened in 2013.